

The Ballarat Naturalist

APRIL 2011



MOUNT WARRENHEIP AND BEYOND

The excursion on the 6th of March 2011, nearly didn't begin at Mt Warrenheip as proposed, as unknowingly our visit coincided with a fun run fundraiser for the local Dunnstown School. Fortunately as the last runner struggled down the mount, the marshals started packing up and the excursion leader was allowed to drive up. A short while later the rest of the members arrived and the excursion began.

Mt Warrenheip is a nature conservation reserve managed by Parks Victoria. Many people don't realise that it is possible to drive up to the top and the road which



passes by the back gate of Kryal Castle is reasonably steep as it winds up to where there are several communication towers on the top. One only gets glimpses of the surrounding country side and there is virtually no view from the top due to the tree cover.

The manna gums, messmates and blackwoods have all grown back since the gold rush and are now undergoing another threat, dieback. There are a few reasons given why the trees are dying, one being the prolonged drought and another over population of koalas in the past. The understorey in many places is very weedy, mostly beside the tracks and like Mt Buninyong, forget-me-nots are taking over.

After a short stroll along the track and doing our bit for the environment by picking up rubbish (after all it was Clean Up Australia Day and the leader just happened to have some bags in the car) we made our way down, stopping briefly at a clearing to look back across the western freeway and beyond as Les pointed out some of the landmarks.

The next stop was Mt Buninyong. The sun was trying to break through as we had morning tea before heading up the look out tower. A small area has been fenced off and planted with indigenous species. The *Pelargonium australe* was flowering prolifically and we identified several other species such as austral indigo, bursaria and fireweed (*Senecio* sp.). According to the information sign “in the 1840’s the slopes of Mt Buninyong were thickly wooded and below the north east face the Trial Saw Mill operated in the 1850’s supplying large quantities of timber during the gold rush”.

The breeze was quite brisk from the look out but most of us managed to climb up and look at the fantastic view. Water - the ultimate resource, had been the topic for the Friday night’s meeting and the number of dams that were full indicates the farmers should be well resourced for a while to come. After some athleticism a



beer keg was removed from the top of the toilet block to be recycled. Obviously the club’s OH&S Policy needs another paragraph.

We stopped off at Blackberry Lane on the way down to enjoy the sunshine which was now quite warm and we ambled along a section of the crater walk and then back down the lane to the car park. The bird watchers waited for the noise to die down and saw a yellow tufted

honeyeater, satin flycatcher, tree creeper, yellow robin and wrens. This year has been remarkable for the number of butterflies and there was much discussion about the ones we were seeing. A chequered Swallow-tail was identified along with common browns and cabbage whites.

The lunch stop was at the Blast Furnace Reserve near Lal Lal, after which we walked down to look at the water level in the Lal Lal Reservoir. It is between 1-2m from being full. There was a patch of swirling water that kept us intrigued for a while and several theories emerged as to what was causing it.

The goats seen in the vicinity earlier in the day during a fire brigade training exercise and which proving very difficult to catch were not seen when we were

there. Next we walked down to look at the blast furnace and Greg gave us a fascinating insight into the local history of the area. A female Rufous Whistler, wrens and thornbill were among the birds observed. Female Chequered Swallowtail *Papilio demoleus*. Resting on bracken at Mt Buninyong.



The species has a world wide distribution. In Australia it is generally found along creeks in the inland. Larval food plants include *Cullen spp* and introduced citrus. (Photo: John

Gregurke)

On the way home we stopped to look at the IMLAL sustainable planting that Stephen Murphy spoke to us about at the February meeting. It is a project being undertaken by the Ballarat District Tree Growers using Steve's sustainable design principles. The site is on the Imery property opposite the intersection of Lal Lal Falls Road and Ironmine Road. The plants have had a really good season and are putting on a lot of growth. The final stop for some on the way home was afternoon tea at the Lal Lal Falls Reserve and stroll to check out the volume of water still cascading over the falls.

Elsbeth Swan

PLANT LIST FROM LAL LAL BLAST FURNACE AREA

Scientific Name	Common Name
<i>Acacia dealbata</i>	Silver Wattle
<i>Acacia mearnsii</i>	Black Wattle
<i>Acacia stricta</i>	Hop Wattle
<i>Aira cupaniana</i>	Quicksilver Grass
<i>Anagallis arvensis</i>	Pimpernel
<i>Anthoxanthum odoratum</i>	Sweet Vernal-grass
<i>Asperula scoparia</i>	Prickly Woodruff
<i>Brachyscome multifida</i>	Cut-leaf Daisy
<i>Briza maxima</i>	Large Quaking-grass
<i>Cassinia arcuata</i>	Drooping Cassinia
<i>Cymbonotus preissianus</i>	Austral Bear's-ear
<i>Dianella admixta</i>	Black-anther Flax-lily
<i>Dichondra repens</i>	Kidney-weed
<i>Eucalyptus aromaphloia</i>	Scentbark

Scientific Name	Common Name
<i>Eucalyptus obliqua</i>	Messmate Stringybark
<i>Gonocarpus tetragynus</i>	Common Raspwort
<i>Goodenia lanata</i>	Trailing Goodenia
<i>Hydrocotyle laxiflora</i>	Stinking Pennywort
<i>Hypochoeris radicata</i>	Flatweed
<i>Lagenophora stipitata</i>	Common Bottle-daisy
<i>Lomandra filiformis</i>	Wattle Mat-rush
<i>Luzula meridionalis</i>	Common Woodrush
<i>Microlaena stipoides</i> var. <i>stipoides</i>	Weeping Grass
<i>Oxalis exilis</i>	Shady Wood-sorrel
<i>Poa sieberiana</i>	Grey Tussock-grass
<i>Poranthera microphylla</i> s.l.	Small Poranthera
<i>Pteridium esculentum</i>	Austral Bracken
<i>Pterostylis nutans</i>	Nodding Greenhood
<i>Senecio glomeratus</i>	Annual Fireweed
<i>Senecio quadridentatus</i>	Cotton Fireweed
<i>Wahlenbergia gracilenta</i> s.l.	Annual Bluebell
<i>Wahlenbergia gracilis</i>	Sprawling Bluebell
<i>Wahlenbergia stricta</i> subsp. <i>stricta</i>	Tall Bluebell

MT WARRENHEIP MONITORING

Parks Victoria is monitoring the vegetation on Mt Warrenheip after a trial burn. An area of 1 hectare was burnt by a low intensity fire on 6 January 2011. The area will be monitored to follow the response of invasive weeds and native species. Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat was invited to assist with the monitoring. The loss of trees and weed invasion during the past dry years has stimulated interest in the vegetation.

On Thursday 17 March, 4 FNCB members joined Parks Victoria staff, landcare members and conservation volunteers to survey the area. Three 20 x 20 metre quadrats were set up in both the burnt area and adjacent unburned habitat. In each quadrat the plant species were identified, percentage cover and life-stage of each species was recorded.

Spear, Slender and Variegated Thistle have grown rapidly on the burnt

areas following the wet summer. Unburnt areas were covered with dense native and introduced grasses, included poa, wallaby, prairie and Yorkshire fog grass. Burning has stimulated the germination of Blackwood seedlings. One plant of Mountain Psoralea was found.

It will be interesting to follow the long-term vegetation changes of the trial. The desirable outcome would be control of weeds and regeneration of trees with an understorey of poa, bracken and associated species..

John Gregurke

MEMBERS' IMAGES AT AGM - THEME: WATER : THE ULTIMATE RESOURCE

Claire and Peter Dalman showed a collection of photographs from their travels in Australia and New Zealand. Australian photos included a swan nesting on the wharf at Paynesville, whale decomposing on the beach at Nelson, magpie geese on a wetland at Port Fairy, heavy rain in the Flinders's Ranges, a boggy road into Carnarvon Gorge and overflowing dams. There were photos showing the beauty and range of uses of water in New Zealand including a movie of Waikoropupu Springs where pure clear water flows from the ground at 14 kilo litres per second.

John Gregurke showed photos of scenes of flooding after heavy January 2011 rains. The photos were taken around Burrumbeet Creek, Lake Burrumbeet and Coghills Creek and showed flooded roads and paddocks.

Val Hocking first showed a few photos of the prolific breeding of bird life



this year at Lake Wendouree, particularly swans, coots, black and wood ducks. This was followed by photos of crabs seen from the board walk by the lake at Merimbula. Hundreds of blue crabs were emerging out of the sand and gathering at the waters edge, being low tide. However nearby among the mangrove shoots, a different species of red crab were to be seen, feeding in the mud.

Carol Hall wrote: Thinking laterally, I decided to speak about ice as a resource, using my recent experience in the Arctic (and perhaps as a promo for my talk in June!). When the ocean surface freezes, sea ice becomes vital to much of the Arctic ecology. Bearded and Ringed Seals haul out on ice floes to rest, and when covered with fresh snow they can

create dens in which they give birth to their pup. Such dens are what polar bears look for, pouncing through the snow to hunt for energy-giving food that will see them through the females' denning, hibernation and birth of



the cubs, and give both sexes a fat store to last them through the summer when they must rely on vegetation until the sea freezes again. Glacier ice calving into the fjords brings sediments with nutrients, enabling algae & plankton to form the base of a food chain linking fish, birds, seals and polar bears. So a glacier front is a very dynamic place, great for wildlife watching!

Global warming is resulting in sea ice becoming less extensive and thinner, causing problems for bears and walruses; coastlines free of fast ice will be subject to



increased erosion by stormy seas. Retreating glaciers in mountain regions reduce summer meltwater for hydro-electric power, irrigation, washing and drinking. Ice is every bit as important as liquid H₂O.

Greg Binns wrote: Within the theme Greg chose to focus on the total dependency of many species of native fauna on the various forms of wetlands created by surface water. Illustrations from Merin Merin Swamp, NW of Clunes, were shown demonstrating the invaluable varying habitats within this wetland and the range of birds that take advantage of these for breeding. Selected images of nests and eggs from these included: (1) in open water -from colony nesting of Hoary headed Grebes to Brolga (11) in stands of Red Gums in water-from Silver Gull to Pacific Heron and Yellow Spoonbill.(111) in freestanding Red Gum-colony nesting of Cormorant species. (1V) on stumps and logs in water-colony nesting of Ibis species. Also shown were examples of significant wetlands and waterways adversely affected by control and damming of rivers: (1) the Hattah Lakes and their reliance on the Chalka Creek as the feeder creek from the Murray.(11) the flooding of Lake Pedder, and the Gordon Dam in Tasmania. (111) the Darling River and tributaries in western NSW.

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FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB OF BALLARAT INC.
PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING ON 4 MARCH
2011

Thank you for the opportunity to present my first president's report to the meeting. This has been my first year of being the president of any group after many years holding other roles in a variety of organisations. It has been a pleasure and much of that is due to the well oiled workings of the committee and the overall enthusiasm of members.

After a year at the Prince of Wales Park it is good to be back in our refurbished meeting venue at the Primary Industries Training Centre. There are some things we won't miss like walking through water to get to our cars after heavy rain, the cool temperature during winter, having to access our library books and other essentials through the ladies room and the longer walk in after the locks were changed. We will probably miss the spacious meeting room and good kitchen facilities.

Last year we presented a range of interesting speakers who informed us and some even challenged us, we visited a variety of interesting places. The March meeting (Treasures from My Archives) saw a collection of books, slides and other interesting articles drawn out of cupboards and from book shelves and the back shed probably. Everything from fungi to news paper cuttings, and members who don't usually do presentations felt encouraged to show some slides. It was one of the great nights when we learnt as much about our members as we did about different places.

My first main task for the year was taking an active role at the SEANA camp at Pax Hill. I was very lucky to just turn up say a few words and reap the rewards of all the hard work the previous committee had been putting in for a long period. Many members have attended various camps over the years and they were able to use collected ideas to put on a camp that was a credit to our club and was very much enjoyed by our own and visiting members.

One of the main attractions of camps is the opportunity to get a glimpse of the local area with knowledgeable guides. The excursions crisscrossed Ballarat and surrounds. Participants could choose to visit the La Gerche Walk, Slaty Creek, Clarkesdale and the Linton Trust for Nature property, mineral springs, Creswick Mining Relics, Lake Wendouree and the North Gardens wetland, see local geology and grasslands, the Ballarat Art Gallery, the Ballarat University Museum, significant trees, the Buninyong Botanic Gardens and Mt Buninyong. Many members took advantage of

and Fells Gully, the Brisbane Ranges and last month to Teesdale, Inverleigh and the confluence of the Leigh and Barwon Rivers.

Our members have shared their knowledge by leading excursions and we have identified fungi, birds, geology and plants and been to new areas or areas not seen for many years like Fiery Creek, Brewery Dam at Smythesdale and the Bostock Reservoir. Members have also opened up their homes for committee meetings and celebrations like our Christmas breakup.

While we have travelled and learnt a lot in the last 12 months we have also written letters about bore water in Lake Wendouree, cattle in the alpine parks, expansion of light industrial areas and made a submission to the VEAC remnant vegetation investigation areas and commented on the fire operations plans for the Midlands area. Members have also represented our club at a variety of forums. In our spare time we developed an OH&S policy and began emailing the newsletters to members which allows most of us to enjoy the photos in colour. We have also farewelled some long time members and friends and welcomed new ones.

We now look forward to another year of interesting speakers and excursions. Thanks to the committee and to members for your support and participation.

Elsbeth Swan

TAKE ACTION FOR THE MURRAY

There's no doubt about it, the Murray River is the lifeblood of our country. People, wildlife and our economy have depended on it for generations.

But the mighty Murray - and the rivers that flow into it - are on the brink of collapse. For too long, too much water has been taken out of them.

Postcards will be available at the April Club meeting for you to make sure your voice is heard on the future of the Murray River.

(March Meeting Reports - continued from page 6)

Ken Hammonds showed: Replica of HMS Endeavour building started 1988 and was finished five years later, since then she has sailed over 170,000 nautical miles. Weirs Cove, Kangaroo Island site of the Cape Du Couedic Lighthouse.

Stromatolites at Hamelin Pool, Sharks Bay WA.

Dinosaur Stampede at Lark Quarry Conservation Pk, 110 kilometres south-west of Winton in central Qld.

the reconnaissance visits needed before the main weekend so it was almost like a year of activities rolled into a weekend.

The SEANA Camp ran very well thanks to good preparation and the work of many volunteers who supplied supper, sold books, registered participants, led and facilitated excursions, set up the room, answered questions and gave directions and did a whole lot of other things that needed doing. Well done to all involved.

In April our minds turned to fire and its effect on animals with a talk given by Amanda Ashton and Tina Bell then we headed off on excursion to Ballarat Common, Macarthur Park wetlands, North Garden wetlands and Lake Wendouree. The image of the cockatoo going for a walk around the lake on the shoulder of his owner stays with me. Looking back at the photos it was a cool day but Field Nats are hardy and the weather doesn't usually put us off unless it is one of the wettest days of the last 10 years and the roads are flooded as they were in September.

Our thoughts moved off shore in May when Marilyn Hewish spoke about Owls and other birds of north America then closer to home the next month when Prof. Peter Gell spoke about climate change and learning lessons from the past. We have learnt about ecological thinning from Dr Grant Palmer and seen comparisons of subtropical woodland in Zimbabwe and northern Australia from our own John Petheram. Cathy Powers dazzled us with images from Western Australia and we travelled the Canning Stock Route with Rod Orr without leaving our chairs. Another highlight for me was last month with Stephen Murphy's presentation on sustainable design being so ably supported by our talented role players.

The club camp was at Apollo Bay in June. Staying at Heath's Folly was an exciting event when we thought the wind was going to blow the roof off. It also provided another insight into members such as who has the most complete streak and those who can manage to get up early to photograph the sunrise. An enjoyable and interesting time was had visiting places like beaches and fern gullies.

The Stella Bedggood Memorial Lecture, Rivers to Nowhere was of a high standard as usual with Tony Wilson a local naturalist and wildlife photographer, being the guest presenter. Luckily we have only just begun to draw on his wealth of images and look forward to hearing from him again.

On our excursions we travelled close to Ballarat when we went to Union Jack Reserve in July and further afield to Hillcrest, Surface Hill, Clunes

FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB OF BALLARAT INCORPORATED
No. A0014919P ABN 13 150 403 135
MINUTES OF THE GENERAL MEETING - 4TH MARCH 2011

- 1. Opening and Apologies** - As for Annual General Meeting.
- 2. Minutes of previous meeting** Tabled and Summarised in Ballarat Naturalist. Confirmed on the motion of John Petheram, seconded Fran Hanrahan.

3. Business Arising: - nil

4. Correspondence

In

- Field Nats News, March 2011; Membership receipt.
- GFNC: Geelong Naturalist, March 2011; Invitation to 50th Anniversary, Sat 9 April, 1-5pm.
- CFNC: Castlemaine Naturalist, February 2011.
- Bendigo FNC: Whirrakee, March 2011.
- SEANA: Minutes, Agenda, Membership renewal, Nomination Form.
- VNPA: Appeal – Cattle Grazing in Alpine NP.
- RHSV: Gardeners Gazette, Autumn 2011.
- DPI: Weed Spotter Newsletter No 11.
- Wilderness Society: Ethical Paper Pledge.
- City of Ballarat: Review of Future Industrial Areas – Panel Hearing July 2011.
- Bendigo Bank: Statement.
- CSIRO Publishing: Advertising.
- Australia Post: PO Box rental \$86

Out

- Premier with copies to State and Commonwealth Environment Ministers and The Age: Protest against cattle grazing in Alpine National Park.

5. Business arising from correspondence:

- That payment of PO Box rental (\$86.00) and South East Australian Naturalists' Association membership be made. Moved Peter Dalman; seconded Claire Dalman. Carried.

6. Reports

- Treasurer's Report: Opening Balance \$5465.09; Income: nil; Expenses: \$179.75, Closing Balance: \$5285.34.

Accepted on the motion of Les Harahan, seconded Fran Harahan.

7. General Business

- Members reminded to bring a plate of supper to share.

- Library is now stored in club cupboards in storeroom along clubroom adjacent to meeting room. Elizabeth Thurgood offered to update the list of books. Les Hanrahan was thanked for repainting the cupboards.
- Nina Netherway was thanked for capably editing the *Ballarat Naturalist*. In her reply she said that the job was made easier by the contributions received from members.
- Denis Thurgood accepted nomination by the Club to the South East Australian Naturalists' Association Committee of Management. Moved: Elspeth Swan; seconded: Carol Hall; Carried.

8. Show and Tell

- Nina Netherway: Wasp with 3 yellow dots on head seen on flowering peach at Invermay Park.
- John Gregurke: Newspaper cutting of award of OAM to Margaret McDonald, Angair.
- Claire Dalman: Cutting from *The Age* re cattle grazing in high country.

9. Field Reports

- Les Hanrahan: Wombat and Rufous Fantail seen on Great Dividing Trail near Korweinguboorra. Lightwoods flowering along Ballarat bypass.
- Denis Thurgood: Citrus Swallowtail butterflies seen on Buddleia at Beaufort.
- Ken Hammond: Pair of Crested Pigeons on aerial in Wendouree.
- Claire Dalman: Dragonflies and damselflies are prolific throughout the area.
- Bill Murphy: Many trees have fallen over following recent rain, possibly because roots were weakened during recent dry years.
- John Mildren: Hoary-headed and Great Crested Grebe with chicks on Lake Wendouree.
- Carol Hall was watching 2 families of Great Crested Grebe at Lake Wendouree when an adult from each family at each other and clashed wings and beaks.
- Paul Norquay: Parrots reported nesting at Mt Egerton last month did not produce any young.
- John Petheram: Impressive number of fungi in Creswick and Canadian Forest. Erosion along track in forests will lead to more water loss from forests.

10. Syllabus Item:

The members night theme was “Water – the ultimate resource”. Members showed digital images and slides on this topic.

11. Supper

CALENDAR 2011

APRIL

- Fri 1 Peter Marriott, *Moths of Victoria*
Sun 3 Excursion to *Western Wetlands* led by John Gregurke
Tues 26 Committee Meeting at Carol Hall's 7.30pm

MAY

- Fri 6 Denis & Elizabeth Thurgood, Club Members *Desert Tracks*
Sat 7 *Lakes and Swamps* - Greg Binns, Club Member

CLUB CAMP 2011

A reminder to those going to the Club Camp on Friday 18 to Sunday 20 November at Takaru Resort, Halls Gap to book your accommodation. Remember to say you are from the Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat as there will be a discount. See last month's newsletter for more details.

Takaru Resort, PO Box 4, Halls Gap 3381

Committee

President.....Ms Elspeth Swan
Vice-President.....Mr Greg Binns
SecretaryMr John Gregurke
TreasurerMr Les Hanrahan

Mrs Claire Dalman	Mrs Carol Hall
Mr Peter Dalman	Mrs Val Hocking
Dr Frances Hanrahan	Ms Nina Netherway (editor)

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Meetings are held at the Primary Industries Training Centre, cnr Gillies and Gregory Sts, on the first Friday of the month at 7.30pm..

Excursions: Leave from the carpark at the Primary Industries Training Centre, cnr Gillies and Gregory Sts.

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